

SUMMARY: The document below is Oxford's commission, dated 9 January 1592, to his servant, Roger Harlakenden, authorizing Harlakenden to sell Colne Priory for Oxford. The wording of the commission establishes that Roger Harlakenden was in a position of trust. Thus, for Harlakenden, within one month of receiving this commission from Oxford, to have purchased the property in the name of his eldest son and heir, Richard Harlakenden, for a fraction of its real value constituted both breach of trust and fraud. Once done, however, the damage was not easily undone, and despite subsequent lawsuits, Oxford essentially had to live with the serious financial loss he had suffered as a result of his misplaced trust in the unscrupulous and ambitious Roger Harlakenden. Neither Oxford's bill of complaint in his lawsuit against the Harlakendens filed in 1593 nor the answers of Roger Harlakenden and Richard Harlakenden have survived. However Oxford's replication has survived, and the allegations in his bill of complaint can be deduced from it. See TNA C 2/ELIZ/O3/32. For the partial judgment in the case rendered by the Court of Chancery on 10 February 1599, see TNA C 78/104/17.

To all people to whom this present writing shall come, Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxenford, Viscount Bulbeck, Lord Great Chamberlain of England, and Lord of Badlesmere and Scales, sendeth greeting. Whereas our now Sovereign Lady Queen Elizabeth by her Highness' letters patent under the great seal of England bearing date at Westminster the eighth day of June in the thirtieth year [=8 June 1588] of her Highness' reign hath given and granted unto me, the said Earl of Oxenford, all that the site, ground, compass, circuit and precinct of the house and late priory or monastery of Blessed Mary the Virgin and St. John th' Evangelist of Colne Earls alias Earls Colne in her Highness' county of Essex by authority of Parliament lately suppressed and dissolved, which her Highness late had of the gift or grant of me, the said Earl;

And also hath by the same letters patent given and granted unto me, the said Earl, divers other messuages, lands, tenements and hereditaments in the said letters patent expressed;

To have and to hold unto me, the said Earl, and to the heirs of my body lawfully begotten, and for default of such issue to the heirs of the body of her Highness' well-beloved kinsman, John de Vere, deceased, late Earl of Oxenford, grandfather of me, the said now Earl of Oxenford, lawfully begotten, to hold of our said Sovereign Lady, her heirs and successors, in chief by knight's service, that is to say, by the twentieth part of one knight's fee, and paying to our said Sovereign Lady the Queen's Majesty, her heirs and successors, as in and by the said letters patent is expressed and more at large may appear;

Know ye now that I, the said Edward, Earl of Oxenford, for certain good and reasonable causes and considerations [me especially moving(?)], and of a special trust and confidence reposed in my servant, Roger Harlakenden of Earls Colne aforesaid, esquire, do by these presents authorize and appoint the said Roger Harlakenden for me in my name and to my use, and to the best profit that the said Roger Harlakenden can for me

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and to my use, to let, sell, demise, lease or grant for such term of years or for so many years and such yearly rent as to him, the said Roger, shall seem good, profitable or expedient for me, all or any part of the said site, messuages, houses, lands, tenements or hereditaments in and by the said letters patent to me, the said Earl, given or granted, and also if he, the said Roger, shall so think good and profitable or expedient for me, to bargain or sell away in fee simple or otherwise to exchange all or any part of the said messuages, lands, tenements or hereditaments in and by the said letters patent to me given and granted, or otherwise to dispose of the same or any part thereof to such other use or uses and in such sort as the said Roger shall think best and most profitable for me, as amply, firmly and by such lawful grants, means, conveyances and assurances as I may or might do myself in mine own person by law or by force of the said letters patent;

And whatsoever the said Roger Harlakenden shall do in or about the premises or any part thereof by virtue of these present I grant and promise hereby for me and my heirs to ratify and confirm without revocation or any [reserving(?)];

In witness whereof to this my present writing I, the said Edward, Earl of Oxenford, have set my hand and seal of arms, given the ninth day of January in the four and thirtieth year [=9 January 1592] of the reign of our Sovereign Lady Elizabeth, by the grace of God Queen of England, France and Ireland, Defender of the Faith, etc.

Edward Oxenford